

Office of Insular Affairs



Allen P. Stayman, Director
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Islands Fare Well in '98 Budget

The Department's fiscal year 1998 budget request includes \$300 million for insular programs and activities. Of this amount, \$87.7 million is for current appropriations. The remaining \$212.5 million represents permanent appropriations under the Compacts of Free Association (\$127.5 million) and for advance payments of federal tax collections in the U.S. Virgin Islands and Guam (\$85 million).

"The islands are treated well in the President's budget," said Allen Stayman, Interior's director of Insular Affairs. "The increases are welcome, especially in such an austere budget climate."

The budget proposes an increase of \$2 million for financial assistance to U.S. territories, and for technical assistance to all insular areas. It requests an additional \$1 million to increase research and control methods to combat the brown tree snake problem in the Pacific. And a \$1 million increase is proposed for the Operations and Maintenance Improvement Program for greater maintenance assistance for hospital and health care facilities.

The re-allocation of special grants for the Northern Mariana Islands, authorized by Public Law 104-134, will provide \$10.1 million for American Samoa



Allen P. Stayman, director of the Office of Insular Affairs, discusses federal assistance programs with American Samoa Governor Tauese P. Sunia at a February 3 meeting in Washington, D.C. Insular Affairs officials on Stayman's left are Darla Knoblock, Dave Heggstad, Cathy Mealy, and Nik Pula. Photo By Tami Heilemann, ISC

Dual Track for Guam Excess Lands

OIA Director **Allen P. Stayman**, testifying on behalf of the administration, supported a congressional proposal to resolve a long-standing dispute with Guam leaders regarding excess military land in the U.S. territory. Stayman's testimony came at a recent hearing of the Senate Committee on Energy and Natural Resources on S. 210, an omnibus territories bill.

The bill would provide Guam with the right of first refusal on all federal excess lands on Guam outside a wildlife refuge overlay of military land. Should military land within the refuge overlay become excess to military needs, the Congress would decide whether it would be transferred to Guam, another federal agency, or a third party. "The Administration approves generally of this two-track approach embodied in the bill, with modifications," Stayman said at the February 6.

About one-third of Guam, or 44,800 acres, is owned by the U. S. Government and managed by the Department of Defense, Stayman noted. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service also is a major federal land manager on Guam, overseeing a 23,274-acre national wildlife refuge, of which about 22,502 acres is an overlay on lands managed by the military. About 772 acres at Ritidian Point (401 acres of which are submerged) are solely managed by the Service.

capital improvements, an increase of \$4 million over the fiscal year 1997 enacted level for Samoa capital improvements.

The Northern Marianas would continue to receive mandatory funding of \$11 million for its capital improvement needs and Guam will continue to receive \$4.6 million as aid to offset the impact of immigration under the Compacts of Free Association. The \$23.1 million operations grant to American Samoa is increased slightly to reflect uncontrollable federal costs incurred by the High Court.

Funding for the Office of Insular Affairs (\$3.8 million) and general technical assistance (\$6.2 million) are unchanged from the 1997 appropriation amounts. The insular management control initiative is funded at a proposed level of \$1.5 million, a small increase of \$33,000 over the 1997 level.

The fiscal year 1998 proposal for current budget authority under the Compact of Free Association account is \$20.4 million, a decrease of \$3.1 million from the 1997 enacted level. No funding is proposed for Rongelap resettlement, compared to \$2 million in 1997. This decrease is the direct result of a full and final settlement reached between the Federal Government and the Rongelap Atoll local government. Under the September 1996 agreement, the people of Rongelap received \$8 million in grants and \$32 million to capitalize a trust fund for resettlement and rehabilitation expenses.

Program grant assistance to the Republic of Palau for education and health care is also decreasing in 1998 by \$1.5 million from \$3.5 million to \$2 million. This decrease is in accord with a formula in the Compact of Free Association. Proposed funding for guaranteed federal services under the Compact is increased by \$390,000 to cover uncontrollable costs incurred by the federal agencies providing the services.

Because a large part of the island has been used for defense purposes since World War II and despite supplementary compensation programs, Stayman noted, "there continues to be strong community reaction when excess military lands are transferred to another federal agency instead of to Guam. This issue continues to create tension in federal relations with Guam."

"The Congress and the Administration recognized this unique situation when, four years ago, the Federal Government authorized the transfer of some 3,200 acres of former military land to Guam in Public Law 103-339," Stayman said. "Section 4 of S. 210 would continue this general policy of returning excess federal land, not within the 23,274 acres being used for refuge purposes, to Guam.

"With congressional scrutiny (on excess lands in the refuge overlay), consideration may be given to meeting the Federal Government's habitat conservation and endangered species protection responsibilities while recognizing the concerns of Guam," Stayman said. However, the Administration recommended that the legislation should be modified to address several issues to properly implement this two-track approach, including the following major points.



Above, American Samoa Governor Tauese P. Sunia, second from right, and Delegate to Congress Eni Faleomavaega, second from left, met with Secretary Babbitt February 3 to discuss territorial issues. Allen P. Stayman, director of the Office of Insular Affairs, is at far left. Below, at right, are Governor Sunia and Secretary Babbitt. Photos by Tami Heilemann, ISC

American Samoa Governor Meets Secretary Babbitt

American Samoa's newly elected Governor, **Tauese P. Sunia**, and the territory's Congressional Delegate, **Eni Faleomavaega**, met with Secretary Babbitt on February 3 to discuss several major issues facing the islands.

Governor Sunia outlined some of his initiatives for addressing government finance, public health care, and infrastructure development. Among the early tasks facing the governor is action on a financial recovery plan submitted by an Interior-American Samoa Government Joint Working Group.

To assist the American Samoa Government with a deteriorating financial problems, Congress mandated the establishment of the joint working group in 1992. Through the Office of Insular Affairs, the Department funded a financial consulting firm to help the local government to develop a financial recovery plan. The plan was endorsed by the previous governor in January 1996. However, the plan's recommendations to increase revenues and cut costs have not been substantially implemented.

On health care issues, Governor Sunia requested that the Federal Government give him the opportunity to implement his own measures to address the hospital's needs. The Appropriations Committee has directed that the government-run hospital be managed by an independent authority as a precondition to receiving additional capital funding for health care. The past two governors established authorities through executive orders, but the local legislature (Fono) has opposed the policy.

Congressman Faleomavaega, a member of the House Committee on Resources, discussed his proposed economic study commission, which would be established under a provision of an omnibus territorial bill (S. 210). The Secretary would be an ex officio voting member of the commission under the current bill. American Samoa relies heavily on annual federal appropriations for operations and infrastructure.

The commission would focus on the needs in those areas over the next decade and look for ways to minimize that dependence. As part of its report, the Commission is directed to provide an historical overview of the relationship between American Samoa and the United States. The governor and congressman also invited Secretary Babbitt to visit American Samoa this year.